



## A Guide for Older Adults

Senior citizens are a sturdy, reliable generation. We have proven time and again the ability to survive everything from the Great Depression to world wars and the threat of nuclear holocaust. We are proud, tough and resilient.

However, when disaster strikes, we may find that we suddenly feel terrified...alone...and overwhelmingly vulnerable. These feelings of helplessness may frighten us even more.

Coping with personal trauma is a process that each person moves through differently. It helps to know that what we are feeling and the way we are behaving is quite normal under the circumstances. As we learn to understand what is happening to us, we can regain power over our lives and begin to heal.

- Physical reactions to a disaster are normal.
- Acknowledging our feelings helps us recover.
- Asking for what we need can help heal us.
- Focusing on our strengths and abilities will help.
- Accepting help from community programs is healthy.
- We each heal at our own pace.
- We each have different needs and different ways to cope.

It is important for older adults recovering from a disaster to talk about their feelings. Sharing their experiences with other disaster victims can help them to understand they are not alone. Also, becoming involved in the disaster recovery process and helping others to heal can be beneficial to the older adults own recovery. Older adults should be encouraged to ask for any type of help needed, such as financial, emotional, and medical assistance. Seeking assistance is a step toward recovery and independence. Older adults are a generation of survivors and with the proper support will become even stronger and more capable of facing future challenges.

### Where can I find help?

For additional assistance contact your local public health department, community mental health center, a counselor, or a mental health professional.

The information in this fact sheet was adapted from a publication by the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov>